

Testimony to the Environment Committee in Support of House Bill 5419

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Senator Meyer, Representative Gentile and Committee members:

I am writing in support of the proposed bill to permanently preserve the Savin Farm in Lebanon. I have been active in planning and development issues in Lebanon for many years, having served on the committee that prepared the 2000 Plan of Conservation and Development and having chaired the committee that updated that plan in 2010. Our committee relied heavily on broad public input and the strongest voices we heard in both those planning efforts were calling for preserving the town's rural character and agricultural heritage. The Savin Farm is a major, vital component of those.

Agriculture in Lebanon also remains a going economic concern, unlike much of the rest of the state. Farming and the businesses that support it are mainstays of the town's economy, and farmland is the infrastructure they rely on. The Town has worked hard to preserve farms, with considerable success and great local support. The Savin Farm is a significant and very visible contributor to the active cropland in town. By providing for its permanent protection through easement the State would be recognizing and supporting the Town's efforts to maintain and enhance its economy, heritage and character.

Protecting the property provides other benefits as well. A portion of it is now in use as a cooperative wildlife management area for the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, and receives significant public use. Portions of two major feeder streams flow through it and merge with another just to the south to form the Yantic River. Much of the upstream watershed has been preserved, protecting water quality and helping alleviate flooding on the Yantic. Were the Savin Farm to be developed to any significant degree it could badly compromise these efforts.

I urge the Environment Committee to act favorably on House Bill 5419. Thank you for your consideration.

